

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

Book Picks

■ *The Million Dollar Kick*

Whisper once humiliated herself while playing soccer. Now she can't stand the game. Faced with a contest to win a million dollars with a single kick, can she regain her self-confidence and win the cash? Readers will find out in this tale by Dan Gutman.



■ *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*

Granny Torrelli does more than make soup. When Rosie and her best friend, Bailey, have an argument, Granny shares stories of her own life to help Rosie learn how to solve her problems. A heartwarming tale of family by Sharon Creech. (Also available in Spanish.)

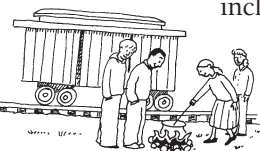
■ *A Collection of Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories*

How did the camel get its hump? Why do kangaroos hop? Where did the rhinoceros get his skin? Readers can explore the fanciful answers to these and other questions in eight classic fables by Rudyard Kipling. Beautiful illustrations by Christopher Corr and others make this volume a delight to look at as well as to read.



■ *The Boxcar Children Cookbook*

Fans of the Boxcar Children series will eat up this title by Diane Blain. The book gives simple recipes for foods eaten by the Alden children during their adventures. Most recipes



include an excerpt from one of the Boxcar Children books.

Active read-alouds

Reading aloud with older children can be a great time for talking, relaxing, and just being together. Here are several ideas to get a read-aloud discussion going:



- Help your children check their understanding of what they're reading. Try asking, "Does that make sense to you?" or commenting, "This part sounds important. I'm going to read it aloud again."

- Encourage your youngsters to think about what they read with questions like, "Do you think that could really happen?" or "What do you think the author wants us to learn?"

- Finally, value your youngsters' comments. You could say, "That's what I was thinking!" or "Now I see what you're saying." ▮

- Connect the story to other ideas. For example, say, "Does that character's reaction remind you of anything?" Or discuss similarities between the story and a person or event in your child's life.

- Predicting is a great way to build comprehension. Ask, "What do you think this part of the story is about?" or "I wonder what would happen if...?"

- Share the enjoyment of language by pointing out words that are fun to say. You'll show your children that language can be very powerful.

Flights of fantasy

Fantasy literature does more than stretch your youngster's imagination. Fantasy books also teach...

Science

Artificial intelligence, lasers, and space travel are just a few of the topics covered in science fiction. Titles like Rebecca Rector's *Tria and the Great Star Rescue* encourage your child to explore the world of science.

Geography

Maps in fantasies like *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin help the reader trace the characters' paths. Your youngster will work on map skills as he enjoys the stories.

Foreign languages

Some fantasies, like J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, introduce made-up languages. Figuring out the new words can help your child develop an interest in learning another language. ▮



Improving comprehension

Preparing for standardized tests

Reading comprehension is a part of most standardized tests. How can you help your child improve his understanding of what he reads? Try a “paired reading” with your youngster.

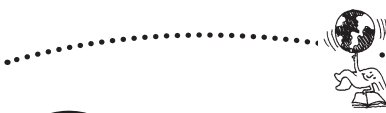
1. First, you and your child silently read the same part of a story, an article, or a textbook. Try two or three paragraphs to start.
2. Next, listen while your youngster summarizes aloud what he has just read. He might say, “I learned that sedimentary rocks are made from pressure.” After he’s finished summarizing, offer your corrections or additions to what he heard. *Example:* “We



also learned that igneous rocks come from cooling lava.”

3. Then, take turns reading another two or three paragraphs and changing roles. Switch back and forth until the whole story, article, or chapter is read.

Note: This activity is a good study aid for subjects like science or history—and it builds listening skills. ■



Fun with Words

Directions for fun

Here’s a simple way for your youngster to practice writing clear instructions. He’ll learn to be more specific in his writing, which will help him with essays for school.

Start by reading examples of instructions around the house (board games, craft kits, recipes). Then, list things your child does regularly that have multiple steps, such as making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or brushing his teeth.



Now for the challenge: each of you choose a task from the list and write step-by-step instructions. For example, peanut butter and jelly directions might begin: 1. Take out the bread. 2. Get a knife. 3. Open the peanut butter.

When you finish, trade papers and try to follow each other’s directions exactly the way they are written. Can you both complete the tasks correctly? ■

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children’s reading, writing, and language skills.

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Other Picks

GAMES

■ Hit or Miss

This list-making game is never the same twice. Players have 45 seconds to write as many words as possible in a given category. Then, they guess which of their words is the most popular—or the most original. *Gamewright*

■ Loaded Questions Junior

Test how well you know your opponents by guessing how they answer questions. This game contains 300 conversation-sparking questions in four categories that make it fun for the whole family to play together. *All Things Equal*



WEB SITES

■ Kids Web Japan

Tour Japan to learn about its people and culture. Read about technology like electronic paper, discover what goes into kids’ lunch boxes, and even learn how to write Japanese letters. A travel section lets youngsters take online trips through Japan.

<http://web-jpn.org/kidsweb/index.html>

■ NetSmartzKids

Encourage your children to learn about Internet safety at this fun site. They’ll enjoy playing games, listening to songs, sending e-cards, downloading screen savers, and watching videos. Topics include instant messaging, e-mail, and computer viruses.

www.netsmartzkids.org



Q&A Vocabulary practice

Q My daughter has a tough time with vocabulary quizzes.

What can I do to help?

A Try sneaking in a little extra vocabulary practice. The more your youngster uses the words, the easier it will be for her to remember them.

▲ Do puzzles. You can turn vocabulary words and their definitions into simple crossword puzzles at <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com>. Select “Cris-Cross” from the puzzle menu in the middle of the screen.



▲ Hunt for treasure. Encourage your child to find and circle vocabulary words in newspapers and magazines and to read the sentences aloud. Seeing the words used in context will help her learn their meanings.

▲ Use synonyms. List your youngster’s vocabulary words. Then, beside each one, have her write words with similar meanings. She can use a thesaurus from the library (try Scholastic’s *Children’s Thesaurus*, or search at www.wordsmyth.net). Hang the list on the refrigerator where she can review it. ■